

# MISS SELINA LUE

## and the Soap-box Babies

by MARIA THOMPSON DAVIESS

Illustrations by Magnus G. Kettner

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### SYNOPSIS.

Miss Selina Lue, spinster guardian angel of River Bluff, presides over an impromptu day nursery for the babies of the neighborhood in the rear of her grocery. Her charges are known as "Soap-box Babies." The fact that she is single makes her an object of sympathy to the mothers. One of her friends is Miss Cynthia Page, daughter of Widow Page. Cynthia visits Miss Selina and learns that she has taken another "soap-boxer" in Alan Kent, a young artist who wishes to establish a studio in her barn. Blossom, Miss Lue's adopted baby, and one Cynthia is very fond of, shows an evident preference for Alan. When Cynthia leaves, Alan hears that her mother is in danger of losing the old homestead. A near-ruckus, Alan admires Cynthia. Selina tells how she came to locate in the place and start the haven for little ones.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### The Wonderful Barn Loft.

"They can't nobody tell what a mortgage and a Golf Club will do!"

—Miss Selina Lue.

"Now, Bennie, run home as quick as you can, for I know your mother is in a hurry for the things. Here's the nickel head of cabbage. Put it under your arm, and take the sack of meal in your hand. See if you can't carry the potatoes on the other arm and the piece of bacon in your other hand. Instead of the sorghum molasses she sent for, I am going to send three-ten cakes of soap, for she's forgot to buy a bit for more'n a week, and I am sure she would rather have it. My, what a load for a boy! Open your mouth for this ginger snap, and go careful but fast." And Miss Selina Lue steered the heavily-loaded youngster down the steps and started him toward home.

As she came up again she paused, and, resting her hands on her hips, leaned out to look far up the street. There was the shadow of anxiety on her usually unruffled brow, and she sighed as she picked Blossom out of the cracker-box and put her far back on the counter, hemming her in for safety with two brooms.

"I feel like I ain't seen Miss Cynthia for a year," she said, "and it has been more'n a week since she came down. The cook comes after things, and she says the child ain't sick, so I ain't got no cause to worry; but I'm jest hungry to see her. Seems like she is a kind of a frosted cake—the more you git of her the more you want."

"Yes, thick with frosting, and white and cold; it's good to look at," remarked Mr. Alan as he seated himself on an upturned peck measure and reached to head Clemmie off from a pile of scrubbing brushes she seemed bent on chewing.

"Well, I've got a feeling in my bones she'll come today, and I'm going to expect her any way. Miss Kinney's bones always gives her notice of trouble, but I've got mine trained so they ache for the coming of good." Miss Selina Lue's wisdom was an unconscious adaptation of one of the principles of a very modern thought.

It was at the lull time at eleven o'clock, when the Bluff dinners were all in the pot, and Miss Selina Lue could get a breathing spell until the afternoon rush for supper provender. The Bluff bought supplies a meal at a time and brought the nickels and dimes in payment thereof. Miss Selina Lue had no need of a bookkeeper—she put her money in a cracked vinegar jug behind the counter. Nor did she ever have enough to make bank deposits, as her stock was bought on much the same principle as that on which it was sold, a little at a time and cash down.

"For," she counseled her neighbors, "having on hand, most of times means wasting, and the piece of meat oughter go in the pot according to what you know you oughter have and not what you think you want. Lots of folks stomicks ain't as greedy as they is."

Mr. Alan had come in for his dinner a little before the time. He spent most of his mornings down at the ferry sketching the roustabouts as they loaded the early boats; but when the wharf was deserted, he found it pleasant to come and chat with Miss Selina Lue as she prepared the simple meal he shared with her. He liked to watch the babies tumble and crawl about the grocery before their noon naps, for the floor and low-lying regions of the store offered unlimited opportunities for adventure to creepers, and it always interested him to see what they could manage in the way of exciting catastrophes.

Miss Selina Lue at such times fairly radiated with good cheer and interest, and he felt constrained to do likewise. In fact, Miss Selina Lue invited confidence as the sun invites the birds in the springtime, and her

views of life were sound if unusual.

The non-appearance of Miss Cynthia was uppermost in her thoughts, and she seemed possessed of an inexhaustible store of admiring anecdotes of that disturbing young person. There was in his mind a sneaking suspicion—nay, a shame-faced certainty—that his own presence was the cause of her seeming neglect of Miss Selina Lue, and his conscience hurt him. Bother the girl! Why should she pass him in the lane as if he were non-existent and manage to convey an impression of his utter obnoxiousness every time he so much as caught a glimpse of her in the distance? He was of her world and accustomed to the amenities thereof, and he was not in the way of being trodden under even a very pretty pair of "first family" feet. His pride rebelled. He was something of a "first family" himself, and was in the habit of receiving unlimited expressions of regard from the fair sex, especially those who were admitted through the sacred portals of his studio.

And, forsooth, what had he done to arouse such animosity? It really seemed an old-fashioned spell of jealousy over his place in the affections of Miss Selina Lue and the soap-boxers. He felt decidedly annoyed that anyone should presume to question his rights in the River Bluff Grocery household. Indeed, he felt entitled to call himself a soap-boxer if he

Mrs. Jim in the background. He seized his hat and sketching kit and slipped out of the back door and off to the river, sore, and determined to do dinnerless, though not exactly deciding whom he would injure by such a proceeding. Bother the girl and bother and bother the eyes that toned with the hat that toned in with her cheeks, the sky!

As he disappeared behind the barn he heard Bennie's shrill voice high up in the scale saying: "Oh, Miss Cynthia, we've named him for Mr. Flarity 'cause he got him for us, but the first puppy he has we are going to give it to you."

"If it's a boy puppy you can name it for Mr. Alan, too," chimed in Ethel Maud, with boundless enthusiasm showing in the tone of her voice and shining through the dirt on her little face. "Ain't he just the cutest puppy?"

By this time they had arrived at the steps and were, figuratively speaking, in the hospitable arms of Miss Selina Lue, though young Jim soon occupied that position literally, as she seated herself on the steps the better to enjoy his company. She looked up at Miss Cynthia with shining eyes.

"Honey," she said, "I was thinking I had got to making you out in my mind prettier than you was, but I see it was t'other way round. Where have you kept yourself for more'n a week?"

Miss Cynthia answered her from the top step where she had settled down in affectionate embrace with Blossom, whose flower head nestled against her friend's cheek with a contented little sigh. "I have been busy, Miss Selina Lue—and a little bit worried. I came down, hoping for a comfy time with you. You—you—always seem so busy—and—entertained these days that I—I—"

"Why, Miss Cynthia, child, what-ever do you mean? I ain't never too busy for mothers to be told to me, and I always have been entertained from five o'clock, when I get up to

sobbing behind. "Taint nothing the matter with her," announced Bennie with scorn. "She's jest bawling 'cause Mr. Alan couldn't take us up the river with him. He says he ain't coming home till night, Miss Selina Lue, and don't want no dinner or nothing."

"I believe he's mad 'cause we didn't name the puppy for him—hoo—hoo—" wailed Ethel Maud, whose intuitions were most truly feminine.

"He ain't tall! Didn't you tell him that Miss Cynthia was a-going to name the one we're going to give her fer him? It was jest because you hung on his leg and cried so; I heard him say something about 'bothering girls.' So shut up and let's take the puppy down and see if Mr. Leeks thinks it's time to cut his tail off yet."

"Oh—hoo—hoo, Miss Selina Lue! Don't let him cut off his tail, please! What would the poor little dead tail do without the puppy? Oh—oh—oh—"

"Now, Ethel Maud, don't cry, honey, Bennie shan't cut off the puppy's tail until the time comes, and then you'll have to stand it like we all stand afflictions what has to come. Don't you want to carry Jim across the street to his mother? Will you be right careful with him?" Ethel Maud, instantly pacified, reached out and clutched the bundle offered her with an inarticulate, caressing murmur; Miss Cynthia gasped with remonstrance.

"Don't worry, child; Ethel Maud nurses every baby on the Bluff regular, and I seen Miss Peters let her tote Jim down to Spout Spring only yesterday. We Bluff folks has to trust the babies to the good Lord a heap of the time, though I must say some of the mothers seem to leave 'em on His hands more'n is fair."

The children trooped down the street, and with a little sigh of absolute contentment the Blossom drooped her head on Miss Cynthia's arm and closed her long, fringed lids over her wondering baby eyes.

Miss Selina Lue tenderly regarded the picture the girl and the rosy baby made in the open doorway, and said as she moved a step nearer, "Honey, what's been a-bothering you? Would it help to tell me? Is your ma worse?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### WANT BARGAINS IN PEWS

Thrifty Church-Goers Who Seek Cut Rates Sometimes Will Overlook All Other Considerations.

Ministers have so many things to worry about that it is pretty hard to add the bargain-hunting habits of their parishioners to their other cares, but some of them are doomed to shoulder that extra burden. Old members of the congregation are not likely to go out hunting cut-rate pews in other churches, but newcomers who are just deciding upon a church home all do it.

"A reduction of two dollars a year in pew rent will fetch the bargain-hunter every time," said a sexton. "Only last week a young woman who expects to make her home in this city concluded that of all city churches of this denomination she liked ours best and would take a pew here, but when she found she could get a pew that suited her about as well in another church for three dollars a year less she let all other considerations go by the board and identified herself with that church. The cut-rate pew hunter is a recognized feature of modern church life. Because a new member elects to join our congregation does not at all signify that he shares our religious convictions or likes the pastor and our service; it may mean that we charge less for the pew he likes than another church up street."

#### A Strange Situation.

"Humor is a funny thing," said Binks.

"It ought to be," said the philosopher.

"Oh, I don't mean that way," said Binks. "I mean that it is a strange thing. Now, I can't speak French, but I can always understand a French joke; and I can speak English, but I'm blest if I can see an English joke."

"Most people are," said the philosopher.

"Are what?" said Binks. "Blest if they can see an English joke," said the philosopher. "It is a sign of an unusually keen vision."—Harper's Weekly.

#### The Best Way.

When you resist the temptation to go the Sour Way, don't go too far and go the Sweet Way. Some people have such sweet dispositions that they are disagreeable. The best way is the Quiet Way—to let people alone as much as possible.—Atchison Globe.

#### Duty.

It is thy duty oftentimes to do what thou wouldst not; thy duty, too, to leave undone what thou wouldst do.—Thomas a Kempis.

#### Salt in Chili

The salt beds of Chili could supply the world with salt for ages to come, the mineral being found in large deposits 39 per cent pure.

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A few years ago I was troubled with a complication of kidney and stomach ailments, and although I tried two or three different doctors, I was unable to obtain a cure. Having heard a great deal about Swamp-Root, I decided to give it a trial and purchased a one dollar bottle of Mr. Alexander, the druggist. From the beginning I could notice a change for the better and after taking eight bottles of your medicine, I felt entirely cured and have not had any trouble since.

Had I begun using Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root sooner I would have been a few hundred dollars to the good and saved myself a lot of suffering.

You may use my testimonial any time you wish.

Yours very truly,  
CHARLES E. HARRIS,  
460 Sixth St.,  
Marion, Ia.

I certify that Charles E. Harris signed the above testimonial in my presence, being first duly sworn to the truth thereof this 12th day of July, 1909.

D. R. KINLEY, J. P.

Letter to  
Dr. Kilmer & Co.,  
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#### That Awful Mrs. Jones.

Mrs. Smith—She is so unobscuring! Mrs. Brown—And always complaining. The other day, while ballooning near a storm center, she collided with a rain cloud and reported to the aeroplane sprinkler had splashed water all over her best gown!—Widow.

#### Not Boasting of It.

Theatrical Manager—I understand that you played with Booth, Miss Sereleaf.

The Actress (with much spirit)—Well, I don't think it's anybody's business how old I am!

If It's Your Eye Use Pettit's Eye Salve for inflammation, styes, itching lids, eye aches, defects of vision and sensitivity to strong lights. All druggists or Howard Bros., Buffalo, N. Y.

It is possible to have too much of a good thing. The dog with the shortest tail runs the least danger of having the cans tied to it.

The Chicago Fire could have been prevented with one pail of water, but the water was not handy. Keep a bottle of Hamlin's Wizard Oil handy and avoid the fiery pains of inflammation.

It is sweet to feel by what fine spun threads our affections are drawn to gether.—Sterne.

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